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SUBJECT: Climate Conferences Build Toward COP-15

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This is an action request for OES/EGC--see para 15.

11. (SBU) Summary: Denmark has recently been host to a flurry of climate-related conferences in the run-up to the UNFCCC's Conference of Parties (COP-15) meeting in December. One of them, sponsored by the International Association of Research Universities and held here in Copenhagen, attracted international media attention, focused on scientific research updating trends (generally for the worse) since the issuance of the last IPCC report in 2007. The Danish Prime Minister pledged to convey the gravity of new scientific data to his international counterparts.

12. (SBU) The World Business Summit on Climate Change May 24-26 will be the next major gathering in Copenhagen. Organizers, and Danish Climate and Energy Minister Connie Hedegaard, wish Special Envoy Todd Stern to participate. Doing so would advance U.S. climate goals in advance of COP-15. End Summary.

Background

13. (U) Several climate events recently took place in Denmark. The first, hosted by Aarhus University March 5-7, was entitled "Beyond Kyoto--Addressing the Challenges of Climate Change." That was quickly followed by a larger International Scientific Congress on International Association of Research Universities International Scientific Congress on "Climate Change, Global Risks, Challenges and Decisions" (www.climatecongress.ku.dk) held in Copenhagen from 10-12 March. The IARU group includes the University of Copenhagen, Yale, and UC Berkeley, among others. More than 2,000 scientists attended, and their findings garnered major international media attention. Both these conferences were partially sponsored by the Danish Government. A third conference in Copenhagen, sponsored by the Norwegian firm PointCarbon, took place March 17-19 and focused on the European carbon market. The next major conference here will be the World Business Summit on Climate Change, May 24-26.

Scientists Spotlight Worsening Trends

14. (U) The IARU Congress was designed to highlight climate change scientific results achieved since the IPCC published its last report, in 2007. That report's findings were not in question, but featured data that needed updating, according to organizer Prof. Katherine Richardson of the University of Copenhagen. To emphasize that the IPCC report remained valid (if outdated), IPCC Chair Pachauri was a featured speaker at the Congress. Preliminary

conclusions from the Congress appear below, and will be published in a synthesis report to be published in June this year. The synthesis report will be disseminated in National Geographic, Time, and Scientific American, as well as with electronic media.

15. (SBU) Dr. Richardson summed up the lessons of the IARU Congress in the final session, and presented them symbolically to Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen to inform COP-15 deliberations. These included:

--Climatic Trends: Recent observations confirm that, given high rates of observed emissions, the worst-case IPCC scenario trajectories (or even worse) are being realized.

--Social disruption: Recent observations show that societies are highly vulnerable to even modest levels of climate change, with poor nations and communities particularly at risk. Temperature rises above two degrees Celsius will be very difficult for contemporary societies to cope with, and will increase the level of climate disruption through the rest of the century.

--Long-Term Strategy: Rapid, sustained, and effective mitigation based on coordinated global and regional action is required to avoid dangerous climate change regardless of how it is defined. Weaker targets for 2020 increase the risk of crossing tipping points and make the task of meeting 2050 targets more difficult. Delay in initiating effective mitigation actions increases significantly the long-term social and economic costs of both adaptation and mitigation.

--Equity: Climate change is having, and will have, strongly differential effects on people within and between countries and regions, on this generation and future generations, and on human societies and the natural world. An effective, well-funded

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adaptation safety net is required for those people least capable of coping with climate change impacts, and a common but differentiated mitigation strategy is needed to protect the poor and most vulnerable.

--Inaction is Inexcusable: There is no excuse for inaction. We already have many tools and approaches (economic, technological, behavioral, management) to deal effectively with the climate change challenge. But they must be vigorously and widely implemented to achieve the societal transformation required to de-carbonize economies.

--Meeting the Challenge: To achieve the societal transformation required to meet the climate change challenge, we must overcome a number of significant constraints and seize critical opportunities.

PM Message Gets Message

16. (U) Upon receiving these conclusions, Prime Minister Rasmussen said "It's imperative that we reach agreement in December. We have to lay out some long-term goals and the rich have to help the poor. Green growth is the future and if we fail, we fall." Rasmussen thanked conference participants and committed to transmit the scientific consensus achieved in the Congress, saying science should be the basis of good policymaking. Success at COP-15 would require intense negotiations at the highest levels, he said, including three 'stepping stones:'

--The G8 meeting in La Maddalena in July
--The High Level UN Event in NY in September
--Sep-Dec intensive UNFCCC negotiations

17. (U) Rasmussen encouraged heads of government to attend COP-15 "to close the deal" which should include:

--Targets (50% overall by 2050, including 80% for developed countries, and shorter term targets for 2020);
--Funding (focused on developing countries, for tech transfer, forestry/land use and adaptation); and,
--Verification (to measure/report/verify mitigation, finance and

technology transfer).

¶8. (U) COP-15 would only be the beginning, PM Rasmussen concluded, setting a framework to share technology and promote deployment, which should be adjusted to focus on opportunities thereafter. Denmark's ambition is to become completely free of fossil fuels in the future, he concluded.

UNFCCC's De Boer Defends Clean Development Mechanism

¶9. (U) The opening session of the March 17-19 PointCarbon conference featured UNFCCC chief Yvo de Boer, who listed four issues that must be resolved prior to agreement at COP-15:

- Ambitious midterm and long-term targets for developed countries. (He called Obama Administration goals for 2020 and 2050 "a first good offer.");
- Clarity on nationally appropriate mitigation actions by developing countries (these could come in a variety of forms, including sectoral goals, individual projects, efficiency goals, or national emissions goals);
- Financial and technical support for mitigation and adaptation, going beyond voluntary contributions to more sustainable mechanisms; and,
- A governance structure based on equity.

¶10. (SBU) De Boer criticized EU finance ministers as "unhelpfully" going beyond the Bali roadmap in calling on developing countries to formulate comprehensive national strategies to reduce emissions. The compromises in the roadmap were hard-won, he argued, the resulting agreement was fragile but must be respected. He hoped the EU Council would return to the original Bali formulation of 15-30% reductions from "business as usual" in the developing countries. He claimed that "if we add up what China/India/Brazil are already doing to prevent climate change, it already exceeds what Europe is doing" and urged that COP-15 NOT be portrayed as an attempt to "bribe the reluctant."

EC Favors Sectoral Approach over CDM

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¶11. (SBU) EC deputy Environment DG Jos Delbeke, appearing on the same panel with de Boer, Delbeke said a recent EU troika visit to Japan and the U.S. provided an opportunity to share the EC financing proposal. Delbeke said the tone from the Obama Administration is positive, but the EC awaits more details. He hoped that a newly-revitalized US-EU high level dialogue on climate change could focus on issues like comparability of targets among developed countries, and the EC's proposed sectoral mechanism for developing countries.

¶12. (SBU) Delbeke called for project-based Clean Development Mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol to be replaced with a "sectoral carbon market crediting system" for developing countries focused on the power sector and other sectors exposed to international competition (e.g. steel making, cement). The sectoral approach should provide a more comprehensive price signal, great environmental ambition level, lower transaction costs, and more ambitious benchmarks than the existing CDM.

World Business Summit Next Big Event

¶13. (SBU) The Copenhagen Climate Council, a Danish partnership of government/media/business, in cooperation with the UN Global Compact, the World Economic Forum, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and others will host a World Business Summit on Climate Change May 24-26 in Copenhagen. Confirmed speakers include UN Syg Ban ki-Moon, former VP Gore, EC President Barroso, UNFCCC head de Boer, and Danish Climate Minister Hedegaard. Organizers have invited S/E Stern to speak at the plenary session on the opening day of the conference on the subject of "Getting to Copenhagen" (invitation letter conveyed by email to OES on March 13). For her part, Minister Hedegaard has invited S/E Stern to

participate in a "Corporate Ministerial Roundtable" on "corporate contributions to a new global deal" on May 26.

Comment

¶14. (SBU) Though the USG was not officially represented at these recent conferences, President Obama was often praised for his commitment to address climate change. S/E Stern's March 3 climate policy address was explicitly praised by Dr. Richardson at the IARU Congress. PM Rasmussen raised the issue of midterm targets gently, without referring specifically to the U.S., by implying that simply setting ambitious 2050 goals was "not enough." NGO contacts here are more direct, warning privately they will begin highlighting the lack of a credible U.S. midterm emissions reduction target. The World Business Summit event offers an excellent opportunity for a USG climate policymaker to build on the positive reception of U.S. climate policies here, while enlisting international business support for an ambitious climate agreement at COP-15. We recommend that S/E Stern take advantage of this opportunity by accepting these invitations, if possible.

Action Request

¶15. For OES/EGC: Please advise if S/E Stern will accept invitations to participate at the World Business Summit May 24-26.

McCulley